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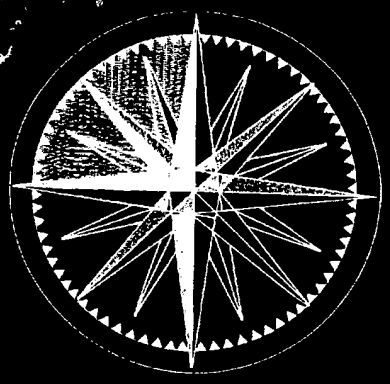

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SPECIAL REPORT

BACKGROUND FOR ELECTIONS IN SOUTH KOREA

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

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11 October 1963

BACKGROUND FOR ELECTIONS IN SOUTH KOREA

The mood of present-day South Korean politics is rooted in Korea's long history of resistance to foreign domination and the adherence of the people to Confucian social values that tend to emphasize personal and family ties to the detriment of the national interest. The resulting combination of intense national pride and ferocious factionalism has earned the Koreans their reputation as the Irish of the Orient. Since the founding of the republic in 1948, most political questions have centered essentially on the issue of the "outs" versus the "ins," and political loyalties have been given to individual leaders rather than to parties and platforms. Although the present opposition has introduced some ideological overtones, the 15 October presidential election and the 26 November National Assembly elections are no exception to the Korean rule.

The "Ins"

Junta leader Pak Chong-hui is a nationalist, suspicious of US policy toward Korea. For a brief period after World War II he probably was a Communist, but his outlook appears to be more influenced by the example of Nasir and Sukarno than by doctrinaire Marxist socialism. The two main themes of his presidential campaign have been partially veiled anti-Americanism and, implicitly, an advocacy of neutralism. At the same time he has assured the public that American aid to Korea would continue if he is elected.

Pak's power depends essentially on his ability to keep the armed forces behind him. His regime is a coalition of three more or less clearly defined military power groupings. The dominant one at present is made up of the followers of former security chief Kim Chong-pil. Kim is particularly well situated to hold Pak's confidence because of his marriage to Pak's niece, who lived in Pak's home after her father's death in 1946.

As a result of Pak's continuing support, Kim's clique controls the national security apparatus, holds strategic positions in the revolutionary council and in key government agencies, and runs the regime-sponsored Democratic-Republican Party. Sometimes described as "angry young men," the members of the clique are mostly young colonels who share Kim's anti-American, nationalist, quasi-leftist leanings. They are determined to use whatever means are necessary to perpetuate the power of the regime.

The second faction behind Pak is usually called the anti-Kim

faction or the "moderates." They, like Kim's followers, are composed mainly of members of the group that brought off the 1961 coup, but are generally less extreme in their actions and views. The unifying force among the "moderates" is hatred of Kim. As a result, some of these "ins" have wound up in jail; others are still in the Liberal-Democratic Party, which they founded in the hope that Pak would adopt it as his own; and still others have stayed in the regime's camp.

The third group is too large and amorphous to be called a faction, but it is a distinct element in the power equation. It consists of the broad range of senior and junior officers on active duty who want a stable government and basically believe that the armed forces should stay out of politics. They are committed to Pak because at present they see no attractive alternative, and they probably will ensure that the army votes for him. They, too, however, hate and fear Kim.

The "Outs"

Those who looked to the civilian politicians to offer a constructive alternative to Pak and the junta have been disillusioned. Almost as soon as the regime lifted its prohibition on political activity last April, all the old factionalism, personal-interest grouping, and individual attempts to assume control of political machinery reappeared. It was almost as if there had never been a military revolution two and a half years ago.

PAK CHONG-HUI

Most of the leading and many of the minor politicians organized separate and competing parties --former president Yun Po-son founded the Civil Rule Party, former prime minister Pyon Yong-tae instituted the Righteous People's Society, one-time Racial Youth Corps leader and former Rhee hatchet man Yi Pom-sok established the People's Partners Party. In all, some 15 opposition parties were formed--some indeed with the clandestine support of the regime, which aimed to help keep the politicians divided.

KIM CHONG-PIL

In other instances subfaction leaders remained with their old groupings while their immediate followers joined the Liberal-Democratic Party, which the regime

"moderates" had organized as an alternative to Kim Chong-pil's Democratic-Republican Party. After Pak repudiated the Liberal-Democrats, former regime Prime Minister Song Yo-chan, who had been jailed for criticizing Pak, accepted that party's presidential nomination. Most of the politicians appear to be trying to cover all possible bets to improve their bargaining power with one another or with the regime.

Ho Chong, one of the most respected of the old politicians, organized the People's Party in an attempt to unify the major opposition groups. However, three successive sessions of a joint convention of three of the four leading parties called to rally support for Ho ended in wild disorder, mainly because of the inability of the leaders to bury their factional differences and personal rivalries. Supporters of former president Yun first deadlocked the convention and then walked out rather than concede the nomination to Ho.

Ho and Yun are fairly typical of the old-line politicians, and illustrate both their virtues and limitations. Ho has considerable popular prestige based on a reputation for honesty and ability. He is a former lieutenant of Syngman Rhee who broke with Rhee after serving as prime minister in 1951-52. He was mayor of Seoul from 1957 to 1959 and headed the provisional government that took over after Rhee's ouster in 1960.

Yun is the grandson of the last war minister of Korea's Yi dynasty. His family is the only one of the old aristocratic houses to survive the years of Japanese occupation, division of the country, and the Korean War with much of its wealth and position intact. Like Ho, he first served under Rhee and later broke with him. He has been minister of commerce and industry, mayor of Seoul, national assemblyman, and finally after Rhee's ouster became President--largely a ceremonial office at the time. He was still in this office when Pak and the junta seized power in May 1961.

At the time, Yun, as chief of state could have attempted to call on loyal forces to save Prime Minister Chang Myon's administration. Instead, he did nothing in the expectation that the junta would call his own group to power. He resigned as President only when it became apparent that Pak had no intention of issuing such an invitation.

Following the struggle between Ho and Yun, four more opposition candidates eventually registered to oppose Pak for president. Although Ho and another leading contender have since withdrawn, virtually turning the presidential election into a two-man race between Pak and Yun, it is not

clear even yet that the politicians will necessarily rally to Yun. Ho reportedly intends to stir up a new scandal by publicly accusing one of the senior members of Yun's party of accepting regime money to encourage factionalism.

The Campaign

The atmosphere of the elections has been set by the determination of the regime to elect Pak president regardless of opposition, and by the opposition's attempt to goad the regime into such extremes of repression that there would be mass revulsion against it at home and a new wave of criticism abroad.

The campaign thus has become progressively dirtier and more bitter. Increasingly large crowds have turned out to hear Pak and his opponents exchange charges and countercharges. Yun's attacks on Pak in particular has attracted growing public attention. Yun has publicized corruption in the military government and waved the bloody shirt of Pak's Communist background. Pak has accused Yun and the other civilian leaders of being American puppets who in the past sold out Korea's best interests for personal gain.

Pak has come all out as the friend and protector of the farmer, hoping that he can carry enough of the country's predominantly rural population to make up for his probable losses in the cities, where the voters tend to oppose the party in power regardless of its character. Pak's adherents have revived all the old practices of Rhee's day for currying favor with the farmers --they have organized parties for the elderly, sent sympathy messages and made donations at funerals, given wedding presents, and even handed out free socks, shoes, and towels. For the first time in recent memory, government-supplied fertilizer has consistently arrived on time for the rice planting. Government money has been spent on a massive scale for pork-barrel projects, and US surplus grain is being distributed under party auspices in plentiful amounts to those who declare their support for Pak.

HO CHONG

YUN PO-SON

The government party has been well organized and financed to support this effort. The Democratic-Republican local organization is strictly controlled by national headquarters. Former members of

South Korea's Central Intelligence Agency, whom Kim Chong-pil took with him when he resigned as its boss to organize the party, have supervised the selection of key local personnel.

The opposition has no such impressive machine. Its local offices, where they exist at all, are often a melding of remnants of the local organization of the prerevolution parties. Local leaders often have appeared to be more occupied with internecine fights for control of the local party apparatus than with the campaign against Pak.

While the opposition has had to depend on the personal funds of its members, plus some help from sympathetic businessmen, Democratic-Republican funds have come not only from businessmen--voluntarily or under pressure--but from a variety of illegal transactions sanctioned by the government. In one instance, the party reportedly received some $600,000 from the sale of cement that the regime allowed to enter the country tax free. The Democratic-Republicans also reportedly got the profits from some one and a half million dollars' worth of wheat illegally imported for the production of alcohol. In other cases it has profited from estate transactions and kickbacks from businessmen who have received favored government treatment.

Pak nevertheless is aware that too blatant rigging of the elections and the use of strong-arm tactics could bring about a reaction like the 1960 student uprising against Syngman Rhee. The troops did not fire on the populace then to save Rhee and it is questionable whether they would do so now to save Pak.

To avoid such an eventuality, Pak has restrained Kim Chong-pil's group from the harsh repressive measures it would like to employ to silence opposition leaders. Government officials have been instructed to prosecute election violations on a highly selective basis, and the police have been ordered to avoid strong-arm tactics. Even the press is being permitted a measure of freedom.

The Voters' Reaction

Confronted by a combination of money and administrative pressures, many farmers may vote for Pak, either because they see him as no worse than any other political leader or because they do not think it prudent to cast a vote against the man in power. As one farmer has explained it to an American observer, he was unsure whether he was expected to vote for the government's candidate or whether he would be allowed free choice. He hoped it was the latter, but he said he would uncomplainingly vote as directed if told to do so. With the rural voters comprising two thirds of the electorate, Pak's chances thus would seem good.

The National Assembly elections may prove more difficult for the regime's organizers to manage. Pak has privately expressed concern over the possibility that the government party might not win a majority of Assembly seats. In the cities, public opinion in all classes is outspokenly critical of Pak and the junta. In some rural districts, which could be expected to lean toward Pak in the presidential race, regime assembly candidates will be up against opponents with strong local ties. The farmers remember the names of their former assemblymen and, judging from past elections, will often vote for the candidate who has demonstrated his loyalty to local interests no matter how corrupt or otherwise unedifying his activities might be on the national level. In other cases the villagers are likely to follow the traditional pattern of electing a member of the leading family in their community, who might or might not be a good regime supporter.

The most important electoral question in South Korea, however, may well be not who technically wins, but whether the elections--particularly the National Assembly balloting six weeks hence--develop into a situation where the regime and the city crowds have another violent confrontation. The opposition speakers and pamphleteers are striking ever more sensitive nerves among the junta leadership, and the more the issue seems doubtful, the more Kim's group will be tempted to stamp out criticism rather than to counter it. Violence may breed counterviolence, and even Pak might finally be forced to drop the pretense that his regime commands genuine popular support and to return to outright military rule. (CONFIDENTIAL NO FOREIGN DISSEM)

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